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NEWS RELEASE

Stage I fire restrictions take effect July 22, 2016

MESA COUNTY, Colo - The Mesa County Sheriff, Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service are implementing county-wide Stage I fire restrictions effective at 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 22nd. All Mesa County fire departments and fire protection districts are supporting the fire restrictions.

"We have been very fortunate to go this long into the summer without having to implement any fire restrictions, but the hot and dry weather has caught up with us," said Mesa County Sheriff Matt Lewis. "Recent rains continue to dry out fast with more hot and dry weather forecasted to increase the already present fire danger."

Fire restrictions are implemented based on moisture content of vegetation, weather predictions and fuel content in our county.

The restrictions allow fires in government-designated fire pits only. While the restrictions do not impact most shooting sports, explosive targets are prohibited. Firefighters have already responded to wildfires started by target shooting. The Upper Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Unit asks the public to be extra cautious when target shooting during fire restrictions.

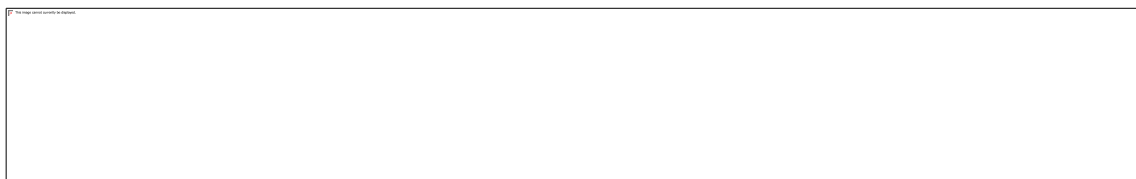
"Just a small spark from an open flame or a cigarette can quickly grow into a large brush fire with the conditions we are seeing," said Grand Junction Fire Chief Ken Watkins. "We really need people to take these restrictions seriously and do their part to help us prevent wildfires."

If you live within the city limits, there can still be areas of heavy vegetation around residential properties that could catch fire easily and threaten homes.

"When recreating on public lands please be mindful of the high fire potential and take the time to stop and think how your actions may impact all of us as a community. In the last week alone, fire agencies responded to 19 brush fires," said Jeremy Spetter UCR West Zone, fire management officer. "We understand this will impact how people use their public lands so we're enacting these restrictions after very careful consideration."

Causing a fire in woods or prairie during fire restrictions is a class 6 felony and can be punishable by fines up to \$100,000 and/or imprisonment up to 18 months. Other possible charges include fourth degree arson and intentionally setting a wildfire.

The Stage I fire restrictions do not impact the Grand Mesa National Forest.



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Prohibited Activities:

- Open burning of any kind.
- Personal use of fireworks.
- Explosive Targets
- On Public Lands, building, maintaining, attending, or using a fire or campfire except within a developed recreation site, or improved site. 36 CFR 261.52(a).
- On Public Lands smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable materials. 36 CFR 261.52(d).
- On Public Lands operating or using any internal or external combustion engine without a spark-arresting device properly installed, maintained, and in effective working order meeting either the USDA Forest Service Standard 5100-1a (as amended), or appropriate Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) recommended practice J335(b) and J350(a) (36 CFR 261.52(j)).

Allowable Activities:

- Fires within liquid-fueled or gas-fueled stoves, fireplaces within buildings, charcoal grill fires within developed residential or commercial areas, and fires within wood burning stoves. Professional fireworks displays permitted according to section 12-28-103 of the C.R.S.
- Fire suppression or fire department training fires.
- Tiki torches, small recreational fires at developed picnic or campground sites contained in permanent fire pits or fire grates with flame lengths not in excess of four feet and which are supervised by a responsible person at least 21 years of age.

Agricultural burn permits may be issued by the Mesa County Fire Marshal. The applicant must provide a copy of the approved burn permit upon inspection.

